



Press Release
July 25, 2006

Media Contacts: Kelley Chunn, 617/388-7148 (cell)
Harold Sparrow, 617-445-0278, ext.11

Faith and community based organizations join Mayor Menino in appeal for 3 million in state funds to help respond to youth violence

Mayor Thomas M. Menino has entreated the current session of the State legislature to act this week to fund a \$3 million package that would fund teen violence prevention programs in Boston during the upcoming fall, winter, and spring. As a first measure, 24 community-based and faith-based organizations have received State funds totaling \$240,000 for summer youth programs, to address recent increases in youth violence. An additional \$125,000 will support collaborative efforts through the Boston Capacity Tank's High Risk Youth Network.

"Stopping the violence in our city is my top priority and we know that takes more than just police enforcement - it takes government, faith-based and community partners all working together," Mayor Menino said. "I am proud to announce that community and faith-based organizations in Boston have received important grant money to support youth violence prevention."

The Boston Capacity Tank, a collaboration between the Black Ministerial Alliance of Greater Boston, United Way of Massachusetts Bay, Emmanuel Gospel Center, and Boston TenPoint Coalition, provides the resources, technical assistance, and a collective voice that helps speak to the needs of those who work daily to positively impact and curb youth violence in our City. In a context of increasing violence and shrinking resources, public and community agencies that work with youth at high risk are working together to ensure that their services are effective, strategic, and coordinated with other providers.

"Today we live in an 'all about me' society. As community partners, we say instead, 'It is not about me, it is all about us' working together strategically and effectively," according to Rev. Ray Hammond, President of Boston TenPoint Coalition. "Today we celebrate the partnerships that will help build and strengthen our City. The youth of our City deserve our full attention and commitment to help them break free from the cycle of violence."

The City of Boston is working with a diverse partnership in an effort to reverse this disturbing trend in youth violence in Boston: the Black Ministerial Alliance, Boston Ten Point Coalition, Greater Boston Interfaith Organization, Dorchester Youth Collaborative, Massachusetts Communities Action Network, and Jewish Community Relations Council.

"This effort is an urgent response to the rise in youth violence in Boston," states Emmett Folgert, Executive Director of Dorchester Youth Collaborative. "The 24 community-based and faith-based organizations will engage at-risk teens from the high crime areas and divert them away from the streets into safe and positive activities. The size of this effort will allow us to intercept entire peer groups of youth that are today's victims and without intervention, often the perpetrators of tomorrow's youth violence."

In this past year, this partnership worked with the State Legislature and District Attorneys to pass law enforcement measures to combat witness intimidation by gang members, to establish a funded Witness Protection Program, and to fund the Shannon Grant program funding both law enforcement strategies and violence prevention programs to lessen gang violence in our cities.

"Gang violence is not just a Boston problem, but a problem in many cities across the state. We even had the frightening retaliatory murder of the mother of a gang member in New Bedford recently. Prevention programs are needed everywhere to prevent this from growing and to give real opportunities to our youth," said Lew Finfer, director of the Massachusetts Communities Action Network. This fall, the partners plan to build on these efforts to cultivate a long-term, state-wide collaborative effort to prevent youth violence.

"As a result of years of collaborative work and relationship-building, the faith-based communities of greater Boston have come together, once again, to pool our resources and strengths to stem the tide of increasing youth violence in Boston's neighborhoods," states Nancy Kaufman, Executive Director of Jewish Community Relations Council. "When we put our faith into action we always make a difference!"

The MA Executive Office of Public Safety has granted a total of \$125,000 to the Black Ministerial Alliance, to work with Dorchester Youth Collaborative and Boston TenPoint Coalition. The following agencies have received awards totaling \$240,000 from MA Department of Housing and Community Development:

Agassiz Village
Boston Learning Center
Boston Neighborhood Network TV
Boys and Girls Club of Boston - Roxbury
Central Branch YMCA
City Mission Society
Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation
Colonel Dan Marr Boys & Girls Club
Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation
Dorchester Nazarene Compassionate Center
Dorchester Community Center for the Visual Arts
Friends of the Hernandez School
Inquilinos Borricuas En Accion
Mission Safe
Museum of Science
National Black College Alliance
Phillips Brooks House Association, Inc
Sociedad Latina
South End Technology Center @ Tent City
Teen Voices
The City School
Whittier Street Health Center
Women's Union
Young Cape Verdean Club